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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

General recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women

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I. Introduction

1. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women acknowledges the vital contributions of rural women and the urgent need to improve the recognition and protection of their human rights. Through its previous concluding observations and general recommendations, the Committee has identified various ways in which rural women continue to face discrimination. In the present general recommendation, the Committee clarifies States parties' obligations to ensure the rights of rural women, with a focus on article 14 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which recognizes the unique situation of rural women and highlights specific obligations of States parties in recognizing, promoting and protecting their rights.

2. Article 14 is the only provision in an international human rights treaty that specifically pertains to rural women. However, all rights under the Convention apply to rural women, and article 14 must be interpreted in the context of the Convention as a whole. When reporting, States parties should address all articles that have bearing on the enjoyment of rights by rural women and girls. Accordingly, the present general recommendation explores the links between article 14 and other Convention provisions. As many of the Sustainable Development Goals address the situation of rural women and provide an important opportunity to advance both process and outcome indicators, the specific intent of the present general recommendation is to provide guidance to States parties on the implementation of their obligations with respect to rural women. While general recommendation No. 34 focuses on rural women in developing countries, some of its components also pertain to the situation of rural women in developed countries. It is recognized that rural women, even in developed countries, suffer discrimination and challenges in various areas, including economic empowerment, participation in political and public life, access to services and the labour exploitation of rural migrant women workers.

II. Background

3. Currently, rural women represent a quarter of the world's population. They play a crucial role in maintaining and improving rural livelihoods and strengthening rural communities. In recent years, the Committee has developed a significant body of jurisprudence on the rights of rural women and the challenges that they face, in particular through concluding observations. Several United Nations conferences have recognized the role of rural women in agriculture, rural development, food and nutrition, and poverty reduction.[1] Hence, there is a need for further specific attention to rural women, as recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The Committee recognizes that rural women continue to face systematic and persistent barriers to the full enjoyment of their human rights and that, in many cases, conditions have deteriorated. In many States, rural women's rights and needs remain insufficiently addressed or ignored in laws, national and local policies,

[1] 15 October has been designated the International Day of Rural Women. The priority theme of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women was also the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.

budgets and investment strategies at all levels. Even when they exist, laws and policies that consider rural women's situation and foresee special measures to address it are often not implemented.

5. Globally, and with few exceptions, on every gender and development indicator for which data are available, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and men,[2] and rural women disproportionately experience poverty and exclusion. They face systemic discrimination in access to land and natural resources. They carry most of the unpaid work burden owing to stereotyped gender roles, inequality within the household and the lack of infrastructure and services, including with respect to food production and care work. Even when formally employed, they are more often engaged in work that is insecure, hazardous, poorly paid and not covered by social protection. They are less likely to be educated and are at higher risk of being trafficked and forced into labour, as well as into child and/or forced marriage and other harmful practices (see CEDAW/C/GC/31-CRC/C/GC/18). They are more likely to become ill, suffer from malnutrition or die from preventable causes, and are particularly disadvantaged with respect to access to health care.

6. Rural women are also more likely to be excluded from leadership and decision-making positions at all levels. They are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence and lack access to justice and effective legal remedies. Clearly, the importance of rural women's empowerment, self-determination and position in decision-making and governance must not be ignored. When it is, States jeopardize their own progress.

III. Overarching State party obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of rural women

A. Application of articles 1 and 2

7. The definition of discrimination contained in article 1 of the Convention applies to all women and concerns all forms of discrimination, making its application to rural women self-evident. Article 2 provides that States parties shall condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and is inextricably linked with all other substantive provisions of the Convention, including article 14. To comply with article 2 in relation to rural women, States parties must refrain from acts of commission and omission that discriminate against them.

8. Discriminatory or otherwise inadequate legal frameworks, complex legal systems, conflict and post-conflict settings, a lack of information and sociocultural constraints can combine to make justice inaccessible to rural women. Factors that contribute to discriminatory stereotypes and practices, especially in rural areas, include the parallel existence of often overlapping and conflicting statutory, customary and religious laws and authorities. Many rural women and girls live in communities in which informal justice mechanisms are used to resolve disputes. While informal justice may be more accessible to them, rules and mechanisms that

[2] See *The World's Women 2010: Trends and statistics* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.XVII.11). Available from unstats.un.org/unsd.

are not in conformity with the Convention must be brought into line with it and with general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice.

9. **States parties should ensure that legal frameworks are non-discriminatory and guarantee access to justice to rural women, in line with general recommendation No. 33, including by:**

(a) **Conducting a gender impact analysis of current laws to assess their effect on rural women;**

(b) **Enacting legislation to regulate the relationship between different mechanisms within plural legal systems in order to reduce conflicts of law and ensure that rural women may claim their rights;**

(c) **Increasing rural women's awareness and legal literacy by providing them with information on their legal rights and on the existence of plural legal systems (where relevant);**

(d) **Ensuring free or affordable access to legal services and legal aid;**

(e) **Promoting rural women's legal empowerment, including through gender-responsive quasi-judicial and judicial procedures;**

(f) **Dismantling barriers to rural women's access to justice by ensuring that formal and informal justice mechanisms and dispute resolution alternatives are available to them;**

(g) **Ensuring physical access to courts and other justice mechanisms, for example through the provision of mobile courts that are accessible to rural women;**

(h) **Providing training to the judiciary, lawyers, law enforcement officials, paralegals, traditional leaders and other relevant authorities and officials in rural areas on the rights of rural women and the negative impact of discrimination against them.**

10. Discrimination against rural women cannot be fully understood without taking into account the macroeconomic roots of gender inequality. States often fail to acknowledge the role of rural women and girls in unpaid work, their contribution to the gross domestic product and, therefore, to sustainable development. Bilateral and multilateral agreements on trade, tax and other economic and fiscal policies can have a significant negative impact on the lives of rural women. Environmental issues, including climate change and natural disasters, often provoked by the unsustainable use of natural resources, as well as poor waste management practices, also have detrimental impacts on the well-being of rural women. Gender-neutral policies, reforms and laws may uphold and strengthen existing inequalities related to all of the above.

11. **States parties should ensure that macroeconomic policies, including trade, fiscal and investment policies, as well bilateral and multilateral agreements, are responsive to the needs of rural women and strengthen the productive and investing capacities of small-scale women producers. They should address the negative and differential impacts of economic policies, including agricultural and general trade liberalization, privatization and the commodification of land, water and natural resources, on the lives of rural women and the fulfilment of**

their rights. Similarly, development partners should also ensure that their development assistance policies focus on the specific needs of rural women.

12. **States parties should address specific threats posed to rural women by climate change, natural disasters, land and soil degradation, water pollution, droughts, floods, desertification, pesticides and agrochemicals, extractive industries, monocultures, biopiracy and the loss of biodiversity, in particular agro-biodiversity. They should alleviate and mitigate those threats and ensure that rural women enjoy a safe, clean and healthy environment. They should effectively address the impact of such risks on rural women in the planning and implementation of all policies concerning the environment, climate change, disaster risk reduction, preparedness and management and ensure the full participation of rural women in designing, planning and implementing such policies. States parties should also ensure the protection and security of rural women and girls in all phases of disasters and other crises, ranging from early warning to relief, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.**

13. **States parties should regulate the activities of domestic non-State actors within their jurisdiction, including when they operate extraterritorially. General recommendation No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 reaffirms the requirement under article 2 (e) to eliminate discrimination by any public or private actor, which extends to acts of national corporations operating extraterritorially. States parties should uphold extraterritorial obligations with respect to rural women by, inter alia: not interfering, directly or indirectly, with the enjoyment of their rights; taking regulatory measures to prevent any actor under their jurisdiction, including private individuals, companies and public entities, from infringing or abusing the rights of rural women outside their territory; and ensuring that international cooperation and development assistance, whether bilateral or multilateral, advance the rights of rural women outside their territory. Appropriate and effective remedies should be available to affected rural women when a State party has violated its extraterritorial obligations.**

14. In line with general recommendation No. 28, States parties should recognize that rural women are not a homogenous group and often face intersecting discrimination. Many indigenous and Afro-descendent women live in rural settings and experience discrimination based on their ethnicity, language and traditional way of life. Rural women who belong to other ethnic minorities or to religious minorities, as well as female heads of household, may also experience higher rates of poverty and other forms of social exclusion. Women working in rural areas, including peasants, pastoralists, migrants, fisherfolk and landless women, also suffer disproportionately from intersecting forms of discrimination. As recognized in general recommendation No. 18 (1991) on disabled women, while women with disabilities face unique challenges in all areas of life, this is particularly the case of those living in rural areas. Discrimination may be compounded in rural areas by a lack of appropriate access to, inter alia, water, sanitation, electricity, health care, child and older person care, and inclusive and culturally appropriate education. As recognized in general recommendation No. 27 (2010) on older women and protection of their human rights, older women and widows may also suffer stigmatization and isolation in rural areas, which expose them to greater risks of ill-treatment. In addition, rural women, including heads of household, living in

conflict-affected areas face security concerns and further obstacles in enjoying their rights.

15. **States parties should eliminate all forms of discrimination against disadvantaged and marginalized groups of rural women. For example, States parties should ensure that disadvantaged and marginalized groups of rural women, including those belonging to indigenous, Afro-descendent, ethnic and religious minorities, heads of household, peasants, pastoralists, fisherfolk, landless women, migrants and conflict-affected rural women, are protected from intersecting forms of discrimination and have access to education, employment, water and sanitation and health care, among others. States parties should develop policies and programmes ensuring the equal enjoyment of rights by rural women with disabilities, including by ensuring the accessibility of infrastructures and services. States parties should similarly ensure that older rural women have access to social services and adequate social protection, as well as economic resources and the empowerment to live life with dignity, including through access to financial services and social security.**

B. Article 14, paragraph 1

16. Under article 14, paragraph 1, States parties are required to take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles that they play in the economic survival of families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy. Inclusive and sustainable development must uphold the rights of rural women, underscoring their role as key actors and fully acknowledging the economic value of their paid and unpaid work.

17. **States parties should promote inclusive and sustainable economic development that enables rural women to enjoy their rights and:**

(a) **Recognize their crucial contributions to local and national economies and to food production, as well as to the well-being of their families and communities, including through unpaid care work and work on family farms, in line with general recommendation No. 17 (1991) on the measurement and quantification of the unremunerated domestic activities of women and their recognition in the gross national product;**

(b) **Promote their empowerment and ensure their economic and social independence, in particular by creating enabling environments in line with general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, including through programmes and policies targeted at improving the economic conditions of rural women;**

(c) **Ensure that they are able to benefit effectively and directly from economic and social programmes by involving them in the design and development of all relevant plans and strategies, such as those relating to health, education, employment and social security.**

C. Article 14, paragraph 1, read alongside articles 3, 4, paragraph 1, 5, paragraph (a), 6, 9, 15 and 16

18. Article 3 provides that States parties shall take all appropriate measures, in all fields, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women.

19. **States parties should adopt effective laws, policies, regulations, programmes, administrative procedures and institutional structures to ensure the full development and advancement of rural women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.**

20. Article 4, paragraph 1, provides for the adoption of temporary special measures by States parties to accelerate substantive equality. Such measures may include redistributing decision-making roles and resources. General recommendation No. 25 emphasizes that, where necessary, those measures should be directed at women subjected to multiple discrimination, including rural women.

21. **States parties should develop and implement temporary special measures to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality for rural women in all areas in which they are underrepresented or disadvantaged, including in political and public life, education, health and employment.**

22. Article 5 (a) addresses the elimination of discriminatory stereotypes and practices, which are often more prevalent in rural areas. Rural women and girls are often disadvantaged by harmful practices (see CEDAW/C/GC/31-CRC/C/GC/18, para. 9), such as child and/or forced marriage, polygamy and female genital mutilation, which endanger their health and well-being and may push them to migrate in order to escape such practices, potentially exposing them to other risks. They are also disadvantaged by practices such as the inheritance of ancestral debt, which perpetuates cycles of poverty, and by discriminatory stereotypes and related practices that prevent them from enjoying rights over land, water and natural resources, such as male primogeniture and property grabbing from widows.

23. **In line with general recommendation No. 31 (2014) on harmful practices, States parties should eliminate harmful practices, including child and/or forced marriage, female genital mutilation and the inheritance of ancestral debt, which negatively affect the health, well-being and dignity of rural women and girls. They should eliminate discriminatory stereotypes, including those that compromise the equal rights of rural women to land, water and other natural resources. In this regard, States parties should adopt a range of measures, including outreach and support programmes, awareness-raising and media campaigns, in collaboration with traditional leaders and civil society, to eliminate harmful practices and stereotypes.**

24. In general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women, it is stated that rural women are at risk of violence because of traditional attitudes regarding the subordinate role of women that persist in many rural communities. Girls from rural communities are at special risk of violence, sexual exploitation and harassment when they leave the rural community to seek employment in towns. Rural women human rights defenders are often at risk of violence when working,

for example, to protect victims, transform local customs or secure natural resource rights.

25. **States parties should prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against rural women and girls, and, in line with general recommendations No. 19 and No. 33:**

(a) **Raise the awareness of rural women and men, girls and boys, as well as local, religious and community leaders, about the rights of rural women and girls, with the aim of eliminating discriminatory social attitudes and practices, in particular those that condone gender-based violence;**

(b) **Take effective measures aimed at preventing, investigating, prosecuting and punishing acts of violence against rural women and girls, including migrant rural women and girls, whether perpetrated by the State, non-State actors or private persons;**

(c) **Ensure that victims living in rural areas have effective access to justice, including legal aid, as well as compensation and other forms of redress or reparation, and that authorities at all levels in rural areas, including the judiciary, judicial administrators and civil servants, have the resources needed and the political will to respond to violence against rural women and girls and protect them against retaliation when reporting abuses;**

(d) **Ensure that integrated services for victims, including emergency shelters and comprehensive health services, are accessible to women and girls in rural areas. Such services should avoid stigmatization and protect the victims' privacy and dignity;**

(e) **Implement measures to prevent and address threats and attacks against rural women human rights defenders, with particular attention to those engaged on issues relating to land and natural resources, women's health, including sexual and reproductive rights, the elimination of discriminatory customs and practices, and gender-based violence.**

26. Article 6 on the suppression of the traffic in women and of the exploitation of prostitution has special relevance for rural women and girls, including indigenous women and girls, who face specific risks because they live in remote areas. The economic hardships of rura' life, alongside the lack of information on trafficking and how traffickers operate, can make them especially vulnerable, in particular in conflict-affected regions.

27. **States parties should address the root causes of the traffic in women by economically empowering rural women and raising awareness in rural areas of the risks of being lured by traffickers and the ways in which traffickers operate. States parties should ensure that anti-trafficking legislation addresses the social and economic challenges faced by rural women and girls and provide gender-responsive training on prevention measures, protection and assistance for victims to the judiciary, the police, border guards, other law enforcement officials and social workers, especially in rural areas and indigenous communities.**

28. Article 9 provides that States parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. Rural women and their children may be deprived of their rights if not recognized as citizens of their countries. Their

statelessness is often the consequences of discriminatory legislation whereby women cannot pass on their nationality to their children and foreign spouse or may risk losing their nationality through marriage with a foreigner or as a consequence of divorce. In addition, identity documents may be more difficult to acquire in rural areas, owing in particular to the lack of birth registration or of marriage, divorce or death certificates.

29. **In line with general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, States parties should ensure that rural women may acquire, change, retain or renounce their nationality, or transfer it to their children and foreign spouse under the same conditions as men, and that they are aware of their rights in this regard. States parties should also provide rural women with access to personal identification documents (such as identity cards, passports and social security numbers) and ensure that civil registration procedures, including for birth, marriage, divorce and death, are accessible in rural areas.**

30. Article 15 provides for equality of women and men before the law and identical legal capacity in civil matters, so that, for example, rural women have the same legal capacity as men to conclude contracts and administer property independent of their husband or any male guardian.

31. **States parties should ensure that rural women are equal before the law and have the same legal capacity as men in civil matters, including to conclude contracts and administer property independent of their husband or any male guardian.**

32. Article 16 provides for equality for women in marriage and family relations, which is something that many rural women do not enjoy owing to discriminatory social norms, practices and laws, plural justice systems where they exist, or the lack of enforcement of relevant laws. Girls from rural communities are at special risk of child and/or forced marriage and early pregnancy. Rural women are also disproportionately affected by polygamy, which severely undermines equality in marriage and family relations.

33. **States parties should harmonize personal status and family laws with article 16, in line with general recommendations No. 21 (1994) on equality in marriage and family relations and No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, guarantee that rural women have equal rights in marriage, including to marital property upon divorce or death of their spouse and to maintenance or alimony, and raise awareness of women's rights within marriage in rural areas.**

34. **States parties should take steps to prevent and prohibit child and/or forced marriage among rural women and girls, including through the reform and enforcement of laws prohibiting such practices in rural areas, media campaigns, particularly aimed at raising the awareness of men, the provision of school-based prevention programmes, including comprehensive age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education, as well as the provision of social and health services for rural married girls and girls at risk of child and/or forced marriage. In addition, States parties should discourage and prohibit the practice of polygamy, which may be more common in rural areas.**

IV. State party obligations in relation to specific dimensions of the rights of rural women

A. Right to participate in and benefit from rural development (art. 14, para. 2 (a))

35. Rural women must be regarded as drivers of sustainable development. Notwithstanding the vital role of rural women in agriculture and rural development, policies and initiatives are often not gender-responsive and rural women often do not benefit from enabling frameworks. The rights of rural women are also often not taken into consideration in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in conflict and post-conflict environments.

36. **States parties should establish enabling institutional, legal and policy frameworks to ensure that rural development, agricultural and water policies, including with respect to forestry, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, are gender-responsive and have adequate budgets. States parties should ensure:**

(a) **The integration and mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all agricultural and rural development policies, strategies, plans (including operational plans) and programmes, enabling rural women to act and be visible as stakeholders, decision makers and beneficiaries, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on political and public life and the Sustainable Development Goals. States parties should ensure that those policies, strategies, plans and programmes have evidence-based monitoring and clear evaluation frameworks;**

(b) **The establishment of gender units with senior-level staff in ministries relevant to rural development, supported by adequate budgets, institutional procedures, accountability frameworks and effective coordination mechanisms;**

(c) **The protection of the rights of rural women, specifically when planning rural development programmes linked to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in conflict and post-conflict environments, in line with general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.**

B. Health-care services (art. 14, para. 2 (b), read alongside art. 12)

37. Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health care, is often extremely limited for rural women, including older women and women with disabilities, owing to prevailing social norms and patriarchal attitudes, insufficient budget allocations to rural health services, the lack of infrastructure and trained personnel, the lack of information on modern methods of contraception, remoteness and the lack of transport. The lack of access to adequate food and nutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation and waste management facilities results in increased health risks. Some conditions, such as obstetric fistula, are also more prevalent among rural women and result directly from the lack of access to emergency health

services capable of performing caesarean sections, and indirectly from early pregnancy and malnutrition.

38. Maternal mortality and morbidity are disproportionately high in many rural areas. Child marriage exposes rural girls to early pregnancy and significantly contributes to maternal mortality, in particular in developing countries. Globally, the presence of skilled birth attendants and medical personnel is lower in rural than urban areas and leads to poor prenatal, perinatal and postnatal care. There is a greater unmet need for family planning services and contraception owing to poverty, the lack of information and the limited availability and accessibility of services. Rural women are more likely to resort to unsafe abortion than their urban counterparts, a situation that puts their lives at risk and compromises their health. Even in countries in which abortion is legal, restrictive conditions, including unreasonable waiting periods, often impede access for rural women. When abortion is illegal, the health impact is even greater.

39. **States parties should safeguard the right of rural women and girls to adequate health care, and ensure:**

(a) **That high-quality health-care services and facilities are physically accessible to and affordable for rural women, including older women, heads of household and women with disabilities (provided free of charge when necessary), culturally acceptable to them and staffed with trained medical personnel. Services should provide: primary health care, including family planning; access to contraception, including emergency contraception, and to safe abortion and high-quality post-abortion care, regardless of whether abortion is legal; prenatal, perinatal, postnatal and obstetric services; HIV prevention and treatment services, including emergency intervention following rape; mental health services; counselling on nutrition, the feeding of infants and young children; mammography and other gynaecological examinations services; the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases, such as cancer; access to essential medicines, including pain relief; and palliative care;**

(b) **The adequate financing of health-care systems in rural areas, in particular with regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights;**

(c) **That laws and regulations that place obstacles to rural women's access to health care, including to sexual and reproductive health services, are repealed, in particular laws that criminalize or require waiting periods or third-party consent for abortion;**

(d) **The systematic and regular monitoring of the health and nutritional status of pregnant women and new mothers, especially adolescent mothers, and their infants. In case of malnutrition or lack of access to clean water, extra food rations and drinking water should be provided systematically throughout pregnancy and lactation;**

(e) **That rural health-care facilities have adequate water and sanitation services;**

(f) **That health-care information is widely disseminated in local languages and dialects through various media, including in writing, through illustrations and orally, and that it includes information on, inter alia: hygiene; preventing communicable, non-communicable and sexually transmitted**

diseases; healthy lifestyles and nutrition; family planning and the benefits of delayed childbearing; health during pregnancy; breastfeeding and its impact on child and maternal health; and the need to eliminate violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence and harmful practices;

(g) The effective regulation of the marketing of breast-milk substitutes and the implementation and monitoring of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes;

(h) The gender-responsive and culturally responsive training of community health workers and traditional birth attendants, the provision of mobile clinics providing affordable health services in remote rural areas, and enhanced health education for rural communities, including education on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of both women and men;

(i) Investment in community and microhealth insurance schemes to support rural women, including caregivers, in meeting their health needs.

C. Economic and social life (art. 14, para. 2 (c), read alongside art. 11, paras. 1 (e) and 2 (b), and art. 13 (a))

40. Article 14, paragraph 2 (c), provides that States parties shall ensure that rural women benefit directly from social security programmes. However, a majority of rural women have limited opportunities in the formal labour market and are more likely to be engaged in activities not regulated by labour codes and social security legislation linked with formal employment. They are therefore exposed to increased risks and need measures of social protection that take their situation into account.

41. **To eliminate discrimination against rural women in economic and social life, States parties should:**

(a) Ensure that rural women engaged in unpaid work or in the informal sector have access to non-contributory social protection in line with general recommendation No. 16 (1991) on unpaid women workers in rural and urban family enterprises, and that those employed in the formal sector have access to contributory social security benefits in their own right, irrespective of their marital status;

(b) Adopt gender-responsive social protection floors to ensure that all rural women have access to essential health care, childcare facilities and income security, in line with article 14, paragraphs 2 (b) and (h), and Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) of the International Labour Organization.

D. Education (art. 14, para. 2 (d), read alongside art. 10 (a))

42. Worldwide, rural women and girls have lower levels of literacy and are disadvantaged when it comes to access to education and training. Rural girls may be victims of child and/or forced marriage and experience sexual harassment and violence in and out of educational settings, which may force them to drop out of school. Their school attendance is also often curtailed by chores, such as domestic and care work, including cooking, childcare, farm work and fetching water and

firewood, the long distances to travel to school and the lack of adequate water, toilet facilities and sanitation in schools, which fail to meet the needs of menstruating girls. In some regions, students and teachers in girls' schools face threats and attacks from opponents of girls' education.

43. **States parties should protect the right of rural girls and women to education, and ensure that:**

(a) **High-quality education is accessible to and affordable for all rural women and girls, including those with disabilities, by improving educational infrastructures in rural areas, increasing the number of qualified teachers, including women, and ensuring that primary education is compulsory and provided free of charge and that education is provided in local languages and in a culturally appropriate manner;**

(b) **Systematic training is provided for teaching personnel at all levels of the education system on the rights of rural girls and women and on the need to combat discriminatory sex-based and gender-based, ethnic and other stereotypes that limit the educational opportunities of rural women and girls. Curricula should be reviewed to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society;**

(c) **Awareness-raising is implemented to change negative attitudes in rural areas towards girls' education and incentives are provided to support rural girls and their parents in offsetting the direct and indirect costs of education, including through scholarships and financial support, loans and cash transfers, and transportation;**

(d) **Programmes are in place, both inside and outside the school system, to reduce the engagement of rural girls in unpaid care work, which constitutes a barrier to school attendance, and to protect rural girls from labour exploitation, child and/or forced marriage and gender-based violence, including sexual violence and abuse;**

(e) **Where girls and teachers face attacks from opponents of girls' education, the protection of educational institutions is a priority for security forces;**

(f) **Rural girls and women are encouraged to choose non-traditional fields of study and careers, such as mathematics, informatics, natural and agricultural sciences and technology, including through career guidance and academic counselling programmes that may also be applied to home-based or community-based micro-entrepreneurial activities;**

(g) **Pregnant girls in rural schools are not expelled during pregnancy and allowed to return to school following childbirth, and childcare facilities and breastfeeding rooms, as well as counselling on childcare and breastfeeding, are made available;**

(h) **Schools in rural areas have adequate water facilities and separate, safe, sheltered latrines for girls and offer hygiene education and resources for menstrual hygiene, with special focus on girls with disabilities;**

(i) **Adult literacy programmes are provided for women in rural areas;**

(j) **On-the-job training is tailored and targeted to rural women's professional needs, and rural women have equal access to technical and vocational education and skills training, such as on sustainable farming practices, animal health and improved husbandry.**

44. In addition to training and education, article 14, paragraph 2 (d), also provides that rural women shall be able to benefit from community and extension services, which play an important role in education for farmers, farm productivity and women's economic empowerment. Those services often do not respond effectively to rural women's priorities, capacities and needs, and insufficiently promote their access to technical knowledge.

45. **States parties should improve the design and delivery of high-quality agricultural extension and rural advisory services, recognizing women as farmers and clients. Such services should ensure that male and female extension and rural advisory service staff have expertise in gender-responsive programme design and delivery and are regularly trained on women's rights, gender equality, gender analysis and gender-responsive programming. States parties should adopt, implement and regularly monitor and evaluate gender-responsive agricultural extension and rural advisory policies and programmes.**

46. **States parties should promote rural women's representation in agricultural extension services by employing a greater number of women as extension and advisory staff, and ensure that organizational policies are supportive of the rights, needs and aspirations of women. States parties should also increase the proportion of educational content provided through extension services that is relevant to rural women by employing additional female scientists in agricultural research.**

47. **States parties should specifically promote rural women's access to technical knowledge on food harvesting techniques, preservation, storage, processing, packaging, marketing and entrepreneurship.**

E. Employment (art. 14, para. 2 (e), read alongside art. 11)

48. Rural women have limited paid employment opportunities and tend to work extremely long hours in low-skilled, part-time, seasonal, low-paid or unpaid jobs, home-based activities and subsistence farming. They are disproportionately represented in the informal sector, uncovered by social protection. Unequal access to income diversification opportunities often results in rural women being poorer than rural men.

49. Rural women are overrepresented among agricultural workers in many regions, exposing them to increased health risks linked to the improper and extensive use of fertilizers and pesticides by various actors, resulting in illnesses, early deaths, pregnancy complications, fetal disorders and physical and developmental disorders in infants and children. Those risks are compounded by their underrepresentation in agricultural cooperatives, farmers' and producers' organizations, land administration and rural workers' organizations, and their limited access to extension services.

50. **States parties should fully incorporate the right to decent conditions of work and the principle of equal pay for work of equal value into their legal and policy frameworks, paying special attention to the situation and labour force representation of rural women, in line with general recommendations No. 13 (1989) on equal remuneration for work of equal value and No. 23.**

51. **States parties should strengthen local rural economies, including through the promotion of social and solidarity economies, and create local employment opportunities and livelihoods for rural women in the context of sustainable development. They should review relevant laws, regulations and policies that limit rural women's access to decent employment and eliminate practices that discriminate against women in rural labour markets, such as not hiring women for certain jobs.**

52. **States parties should further ensure rural women's rights to employment by:**

(a) **Facilitating the transition of rural women from the informal to the formal economy, including in the agricultural sector, through the implementation of Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204) of the International Labour Organization, ensuring opportunities for income security and improved livelihoods;**

(b) **Expanding opportunities for rural women to run businesses and other enterprises, including through microcredit facilities;**

(c) **Improving rural working conditions, including by providing paid maternity leave; setting living wages, with urgent attention to the informal sector, and taking steps to prevent sexual harassment, exploitation and other forms of abuse in the workplace;**

(d) **Protecting the rights of rural women workers to bargain collectively to ensure decent working conditions;**

(e) **Protecting the occupational health and safety of rural women by taking legislative and other measures to protect them against exposure to harmful chemicals. They should receive information about the health and environmental effects of the use of and exposure to chemicals, in particular hazardous chemicals, pesticides and other products used in agriculture and in extractive and other industries. States parties should develop and implement public awareness programmes on those effects and on alternatives and ensure that no use, storage or disposal of hazardous materials or substances takes place without the explicit consent of rural women and their communities;**

(f) **Providing social security to rural women, including in cases of sickness or invalidity;**

(g) **Promoting rural women's active and effective engagement as producers, entrepreneurs, suppliers, workers and consumers in local and global value chains and markets, including by promoting capacity development on quality assurance and standards and public procurement;**

(h) **Providing childcare and other care services in rural areas, including through solidarity and community-based care services, in order to alleviate**

rural women's burden of unpaid care work, facilitating their engagement in paid work, and allowing them to breastfeed during working hours;

(i) Designing and implementing targeted measures to promote the employment of rural women in their localities, in particular through the creation of income-generating activities.

F. Political and public life (art. 14, paras. 2 (a) and 2 (f), read alongside art. 7)

53. Rural women have a right to participate in decision-making at all levels and in community-level discussions with high authorities, yet they are inadequately represented as elected officials, as civil servants, in rural extension and water, forestry or fishery services, in cooperatives and in community or elders' councils. Their limited participation may be due to a lack of education, language and literacy constraints, limited mobility and transport, conflict and security concerns, discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes and a lack of time owing to childcare, the task of fetching water and other responsibilities. Limited knowledge of relevant legal, political and institutional procedures may also limit their effective participation in decision-making processes.

54. **To ensure the active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of rural women in political and public life, and at all levels of decision-making, States parties should implement general recommendations Nos. 23 and 25, and specifically:**

(a) Establish quotas and targets for rural women's representation in decision-making positions, specifically in parliaments and governance bodies at all levels, including in land, forestry, fishery and water governance bodies, as well as natural resource management. In this regard, clear objectives and time frames should be in place to reach substantive equality of women and men;

(b) Ensure that rural women and their organizations can influence policy formulation, implementation and monitoring at all levels and in all areas that affect them, including through participation in political parties and in local and self-governing bodies, such as community and village councils. States parties should design and implement tools to monitor rural women's participation in all public entities in order to eradicate discrimination;

(c) Address unequal power relations between women and men, including in decision-making and political processes at the community level, and remove barriers to rural women's participation in community life through the establishment of effective and gender-responsive rural decision-making structures. States parties should develop action plans that address practical barriers to rural women's participation in community life and implement campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of their participation in community decision-making;

(d) Ensure the participation of rural women in the development and implementation of all agricultural and rural development strategies, and that they are able to participate effectively in planning and decision-making relating to rural infrastructure and services, including water, sanitation, transportation and energy, as well as in agricultural cooperatives, farmers' producer

organizations, rural workers' organizations, self-help groups and agro-processing entities. Rural women and their representatives should be able to participate directly in the assessment, analysis, planning, design, budgeting, financing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all agricultural and rural development strategies;

(e) Ensure that rural development projects are implemented only after participatory gender and environmental impact assessments have been conducted with the full participation of rural women, and after obtaining their free, prior and informed consent. The results of participatory assessments shall be considered to be fundamental criteria for taking any decision regarding the implementation of such projects. Effective measures should be taken to mitigate possible adverse environmental and gender impacts;

(f) In the case of States parties in conflict or post-conflict situations, ensure the participation of rural women as decision makers in peacebuilding efforts and processes, in line with general recommendation No. 30.

G. Land and natural resources (art. 14, para. 2 (g), read alongside art. 13)

55. Rural women often have only limited rights over land and natural resources. In many regions, they suffer from discrimination in relation to land rights, including with respect to communal lands, which are controlled largely by men.

1. Land and natural resources

56. The Committee considers rural women's rights to land, natural resources, including water, seeds and forests, and fisheries as fundamental human rights. Barriers that prevent them from enjoying these rights often include discriminatory laws, the lack of harmonization of laws and their ineffective implementation at the national and local levels, and discriminatory cultural attitudes and practices.

57. **States parties should take all measures, including temporary special measures, necessary to achieve the substantive equality of rural women in relation to land and natural resources, and design and implement a comprehensive strategy to address discriminatory stereotypes, attitudes and practices that impede their rights to land and natural resources.**

58. **States parties should pay special attention to customary systems, which often govern land management, administration and transfer, in particular in rural areas, and ensure that they do not discriminate against rural women. They should raise awareness about rural women's rights to land, water and other natural resources among traditional, religious and customary leaders, lawmakers, the judiciary, lawyers, law enforcement authorities, land administrators, the media and other relevant actors.**

59. **States parties should ensure that legislation guarantees rural women's rights to land, water and other natural resources on an equal basis with men, irrespective of their civil and marital status or of a male guardian or guarantor, and that they have full legal capacity. They should ensure that indigenous women in rural areas have equal access with indigenous men to ownership and possession of and control over land, water, forests, fisheries, aquaculture and**

other resources that they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired, including by protecting them against discrimination and dispossession. In addition, States parties should:

(a) **Promote rural women's access to and meaningful participation in agricultural cooperatives, in which women may be members or the sole members;**

(b) **Enhance rural women's role in fisheries and aquaculture, as well as their knowledge of the sustainable use of fishery resources, and promote their access to forests and sustainable forest resources, including safe access to fuelwood and non-wood forest resources;**

(c) **Strengthen customary and statutory institutions and mechanisms for defending or protecting women's rights to land, water and other natural resources, including community paralegal services.**

2. Agricultural and land policies and organic farming

60. The consequences of industrial agriculture have often been detrimental to rural women farmers and have included soil degradation and erosion, water depletion and the use of cash crops to the detriment of local food crops. The controversial use of genetically modified organisms and the patenting of genetically altered crops are also linked to increased agricultural industrialization. Rural women, however, are more often engaged in organic and sustainable farming practices.

61. Global food, energy, financial and environmental crises have led to the increased sale and leasing of land owned by the State or other actors to local, national and foreign investors. Such agreements, often accompanied by expropriations, have put rural women at risk of forced eviction and increased poverty and have further diminished their access to and control over land, territories and natural resources, such as water, fuelwood and medicinal plants. Displacement negatively affects rural women in multiple ways, and they often suffer gender-based violence in that context.

62. **States parties should implement agricultural policies that support rural women farmers, recognize and protect the natural commons, promote organic farming and protect rural women from harmful pesticides and fertilizers. They should ensure that rural women have effective access to agricultural resources, including high-quality seeds, tools, knowledge and information, as well as equipment and resources for organic farming. In addition, States parties should:**

(a) **Respect and protect rural women's traditional and eco-friendly agricultural knowledge, in particular the right of women to preserve, use and exchange traditional and native seeds;**

(b) **Protect and conserve native and endemic plant species and varieties that are a source of food and medicine, and prevent patenting by national and transnational companies to the extent that it threatens the rights of rural women. States parties should prohibit contractual requirements on the mandatory purchase of seeds producing plants whose seeds are sterile ("terminator seeds"), which prevent rural women from saving fertile seeds;**

(c) Ensure that land acquisitions, including land lease contracts, do not violate the rights of rural women or result in forced eviction, and protect rural women from the negative impacts of the acquisition of land by national and transnational companies, development projects, extractive industries and megaprojects;

(d) Obtain the free and informed consent of rural women before the approval of any acquisitions or project affecting rural lands or territories and resources, including those relating to the lease and sale of land, land expropriation and resettlement. When such land acquisitions do occur, they should be in line with international standards, and rural women should be adequately compensated;

(e) Adopt and effectively implement laws and policies that limit the quantity and quality of rural land offered for sale or lease to third States or companies.

3. Food and nutrition

63. Rural women are critical to achieving food security, reducing poverty, malnutrition and hunger and promoting rural development, yet their contribution is often unpaid, unacknowledged and poorly supported. Rural women are among those most affected by food insecurity, exposed to food price volatility, malnutrition and hunger, and likely to suffer when food prices escalate (see A/HRC/22/50).

64. **States parties should ensure the realization of the right to food and nutrition of rural women within the framework of food sovereignty and ensure that they have the authority to manage and control their natural resources.**

65. **States parties should pay particular attention to the nutritional needs of rural women, in particular pregnant and lactating women, putting in place effective policies ensuring that rural women have access to adequate food and nutrition, taking into account the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security.**

66. **States parties should adopt laws, policies and measures to promote and protect the diverse local agricultural methods and products of rural women and their access to markets. They should ensure the diversity of crops and medicinal resources to improve rural women's food security and health, as well as access to livestock.**

4. Financial services, including agricultural credits, loans and insurance

67. Access to financial services on fair terms is crucial for the development of rural women's enterprises and for their income-generating and livelihood strategies as producers and entrepreneurs. Constraints on women's access to financial services include: legal and policy barriers, which may not allow women to apply for credit in their own right; discriminatory attitudes that prevent women from holding bank accounts or entering into contracts without the consent of a male relative; and requests for collaterals that rural women may lack.

68. **States parties should promote the transition to formal financial services and ensure rural women's access to credit, loans, matrimonial savings,**

insurance and domestic payment services, on the basis of equality with rural men, and promote their economic, financial and business skills. States parties should ensure that rural women have equal access to:

(a) Community-managed and mobile financial services, which should address rural women's needs, for example by lending to women who may lack collaterals, employ simplified, low-cost banking practices and facilitate rural women's access to formal financial service providers;

(b) Information on financial services and facilities;

(c) Financial skills-building programmes using innovative methods that take into account concerns of illiteracy.

69. **States parties should ensure that financial services, including credit and loans, include gender-responsive mechanisms and are not withheld from rural women because they lack a male guarantor. Registration procedures should be adapted to the time and mobility challenges faced by many rural women. Agricultural credit and loans should allow for the untenured nature of the smallholdings held by many women farmers, so that rural women who may lack formal tenure rights are still able to gain access to them.**

5. Markets and marketing facilities

70. For rural women farmers and producers to sell their goods and produce successfully, they must have access to markets and marketing facilities and develop effective marketing skills. However, public and private discrimination, as well as limitations on mobility and time, may serve to exclude rural women from the use of marketing facilities and supply chains. Rural women also tend to be underrepresented on market committees and often have little input into the design, creation, use and upgrading of local marketing facilities.

71. **States parties should ensure that rural women have access to markets and marketing facilities and that, as farmers and producers, they are explicitly consulted on their problems regarding access to and the effective use of markets, so that marketing facilities may better address their needs. States parties should also seek to improve their marketing skills and their skills to add value to their products, including through targeted outreach activities.**

72. **States should also develop specific support and agricultural extension programmes and advisory services to promote the economic and entrepreneurial skills of rural women and to improve their capacity to gain access to markets and value chains.**

6. Technology

73. Reducing rural women's labour time and effort through infrastructure and technological innovation is particularly vital. In this regard, they are in need of agricultural, irrigation and water-harvesting technology and labour-saving agricultural equipment. Furthermore, the access of rural women to information and communications technology (ICT) and mobile networks is as important as improving their marketing and other skills.

74. **States parties should ensure that labour-saving and environmentally sound technology, including agricultural, irrigation and water-harvesting**

technology, and technology to reduce the burden of unpaid domestic and productive work are available and accessible to rural women and create enabling environments that improve their access to technology, including ICT, in rural areas. Rural women should be consulted in the development of such technology and their access to such innovative technological solutions should be promoted.

7. Information and communications technology

75. ICT (including radio, television, mobile phones, computers and the Internet) plays an important role in empowering rural women and girls by connecting them to the broader world and providing easy access to information and education. Various forms of technology can meet a diversity of needs, from joining online communities to taking advantage of distance learning. However, rural women and girls are disproportionately affected by gender gaps in access to ICT, which is an important dimension of the digital divide. For rural women and girls, poverty, geographic isolation, language barriers, a lack of computer literacy and discriminatory gender stereotypes can all hamper access to ICT.

76. **States parties should adopt measures to promote gender equality in the ICT sector and improve the access of rural women and girls to ICT, as well as develop or expand initiatives to increase their ICT skills, for example, through the development of village-based or community-based knowledge centres. States parties should also explore public awareness-raising and training through mobile phone technology, which has the potential to reach rural women and girls.**

8. Land and agrarian reform, land acquisition and resettlement

77. Land and agrarian reform often exclude rural women and are not implemented in a gender-responsive manner. Land reform policies sometimes have a male bias, such as registering land only in men's names, making compensation payments mostly in their name or compensating for land use restrictions (resulting in the loss of land, the loss of use and the loss of land value) based only on men's activities.

78. **States parties should give priority to rural women's equal rights to land when undertaking land and agrarian reforms and consider it a specific and central objective of land reform. They should:**

(a) **Ensure that land and agrarian reform programmes integrate gender-specific goals, targets and measures, and advance both formal and substantive equality, for example through joint titling, and require the wife's consent for the sale or mortgage of jointly owned land or for engaging in financial transactions linked to the land;**

(b) **Recognize and include rural women's equal rights to land in any land distribution, registration and titling or certification schemes;**

(c) **Formally recognize and review indigenous women's laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, with the aim of eliminating discriminatory provisions;**

(d) **Develop and implement measures, including temporary special measures, to enable rural women to benefit from the public distribution, lease**

or use of land, water bodies, fisheries and forests, and from agrarian reform policies, rural investments and the management of natural resources in rural areas. Landless rural women should be given priority in the allocation of public lands, fisheries and forests.

H. Adequate living conditions (art. 14, para. 2 (h))

1. Housing

79. The right to adequate housing is of particular concern in rural areas, where basic infrastructure and services are often inaccessible or of poor quality. Many of the measures that protect rural women's rights to land (for example, the recognition of women's legal capacity, the recognition of the security of tenure and the elimination of discrimination against women in registration and titling) can be applied to protect their right to adequate housing (see A/HRC/19/53). However, additional measures can also be taken to improve the conditions of rural housing from a gender-responsive perspective.

80. **States parties should address housing as part of overall rural development and ensure that measures are developed in consultation with rural women. States parties should improve the quality of rural housing through the design and implementation of targeted policies and programmes that take into account the specific needs of rural women. Such efforts should be made in line with international housing rights standards, including the basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement (A/HRC/4/18, annex I), and should contain strong measures to protect rural women effectively from forced eviction by State and non-State actors.**

2. Water, sanitation and energy

81. The rights of rural women and girls to water and sanitation are not only essential rights in themselves but also key to the realization of a wide range of other rights, including rights to health, food, education and participation.

82. Rural women and girls are among those most affected by water scarcity; a situation that is aggravated by unequal access to natural resources and the lack of infrastructure and services. Rural women and girls are frequently obliged to walk long distances to fetch water, sometimes exposing them to a heightened risk of sexual violence and attacks. Owing to poor rural infrastructure and services in many regions, rural women often spend four to five hours per day (or more) collecting water from sometimes poor-quality sources, carrying heavy containers and suffering acute physical problems, as well as facing illnesses caused by the use of unsafe water. Various forms of low-cost and effective technology exist that could ease the burden, including well-drilling technology, water extraction systems, wastewater reuse technology, labour-saving irrigation technology, rain-harvesting and household water treatment and purification systems.

83. In the absence of toilets or latrines, rural women and girls must also walk long distances in search of privacy. The lack of adequate sanitation also increases their risk of ill health. To remedy this situation, rural women and girls must have physical and economic access to sanitation that is safe, hygienic, secure and socially and culturally acceptable.

84. Rural women's access to electricity and other forms of energy is often limited. The responsibility for biomass collection and use for energy production, and the associated health and safety risks, falls primarily on women and girls. They are traditionally responsible for meeting household energy requirements and, as the principal consumers of energy at the household level, are also likely to be more directly affected by cost increases or resource scarcity. While a specific reference to electricity is made in article 14, paragraph 2 (h), it is important to recognize that rural women may also have other energy needs, for example for cooking, heating, cooling and transportation.

85. **States parties should ensure that rural women have access to essential services and public goods, including:**

(a) **Sufficient, safe, acceptable and physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses and irrigation;**

(b) **Adequate sanitation and hygiene, enabling women and girls to manage their menstrual hygiene and have access to sanitary pads;**

(c) **Sustainable and renewable sources of energy, extending on-grid services to rural areas and developing solar energy and other sustainable energy sources with low-cost technology.**

3. Transportation

86. Transport and road access pose significant challenges for rural women and have an impact on their enjoyment of various rights, including access to education, livelihood opportunities and health care. Geographical distance, inhospitable terrain, a lack of infrastructure and access to public transportation can all limit day-to-day mobility. Even when transportation alternatives are available in rural areas, the associated costs of travel or risks of sexual harassment and violence can serve as strong disincentives for rural women to use them. Consequently, they often spend long hours travelling by foot, creating other problems for them in terms of increased time poverty and risks to health and safety.

87. **States parties should analyse the sex-differentiated demands for transport services in rural areas, ensure that transportation sector policies and programmes reflect the mobility needs of rural women and provide them with safe, affordable and accessible means of transport.**

I. Rural women in developed countries

88. Rural women in developed and developing countries often face similar challenges in terms of poverty and exclusion and may have similar needs in terms of accessible services, social protection and economic empowerment. As in many developing countries, rural economies in developed countries tend to favour men, and rural development policies in developed countries may also at times pay scant attention to women's needs and rights. Rural women in developed countries (and in developing countries) continue to need targeted policies and programmes that promote and guarantee the enjoyment of their rights. Many of the recommendations made in the preceding sections will be relevant to the situation of rural women living in developed countries. Nonetheless, there are unique issues that merit special attention.

89. For example, many migrant women workers in developed countries are employed in agriculture and often face serious violations of their human rights, including violence, exploitation and denial of access to services, including health care. In addition, the move to industrial farming in many developed countries has tended to marginalize small farmers, having a disproportionate impact on rural women. There is therefore a need to facilitate and support alternative and gender-responsive agricultural development programmes that enable small-scale women producers to participate in and benefit from agriculture and rural development. In addition, while rural communities in developed countries may often be well connected to social services and have access to transportation infrastructure, water, sanitation, technology, education and health-care systems, among others, the situation is not equal across all rural communities. In many places, such access is noticeably lacking, and women living within those rural communities experience not only the deprivation of such rights but also an increased burden of care work as a result. This holds particularly true in peripheral or remote rural communities, including indigenous ones, which are isolated and tend to have higher levels of poverty.

90. **States parties should ensure the implementation of general recommendation No. 26 (2008) on women migrant workers, paying special attention to rural women working as seasonal migrant farmworkers. They should in this regard ensure legal protection for the rights of rural women migrant workers and access to remedies, protecting both documented and undocumented rural women migrant workers from discrimination or sex-based exploitation and abuse.**

91. **States parties should facilitate and support alternative and gender-responsive agricultural development programmes that enable small-scale women producers to participate in and benefit from agriculture and rural development. Such programmes should support women-led farms and women as farmers and promote women's traditional farming practices.**

92. **States parties should improve the living situation of rural women, in particular indigenous ones, who reside in peripheral regions, which tend to be poorer, more isolated and less connected to social services. They should accord priority to the development of those rural communities, engaging local women in the design and implementation of rural development plans.**

V. Data on the situation of rural women

93. A fundamental challenge to the implementation of article 14 is a general lack of disaggregated data about the situation of rural women, which prevents the adequate monitoring and enforcement of their rights under the Convention.

94. **States parties should collect, analyse, use and disseminate data on the situation of rural women, disaggregated by sex, age, geographical location, disability and socioeconomic, minority or other status. Such data, including for Sustainable Development Goal indicators, should be used to inform and design measures, including temporary special measures, aimed at achieving substantive equality for rural women in all spheres of life. Those data should also include information on the situation of rural women, including on specific**

groups of rural women who face intersecting forms of discrimination and specific barriers in gaining access to their rights.

VI. Reservations and declarations

95. Reservations to any article of the Convention, and in particular articles 2 (f), 5 (a), 7, 9 and 14 to 16, may have a disproportionate impact on rural women. Examples include reservations limiting or otherwise adversely affecting their ability to enjoy rights to housing, land and property, such as those relating to succession and inheritance, as well as reservations limiting their right to political participation.

96. **States parties that have entered reservations should provide information in their periodic reports to the Committee on the specific effects of such reservations on the enjoyment by rural women of their rights, as set out in the Convention, and indicate the steps taken to keep those reservations under review, with a view to withdrawing them as soon as possible.**

VII. Dissemination and reporting

97. **The Committee encourages States parties to translate the present general recommendation into national and local languages, including indigenous and minority languages, and to disseminate it widely to all branches of government, civil society, the media, academic institutions and women's organizations, including rural women's organizations. The Committee recommends that, when preparing their periodic reports, especially as regards article 14, States parties consult rural women's groups, including women farmers' organizations, producer collectives and rural cooperatives.**